

Matthew 11:28

by Carl Armerding

The Lord Jesus invites all people to come to him and find rest and peace in him, regardless of their past sins or mistakes.

Duration: 38:36

Scripture: Isaiah 45:22, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:15, Matthew 11:28-30, Matthew 16:2, John 3:16, John 4:29

Topics: "Rest"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker criticizes the current generation for their superficial and theatrical approach to life. He points out that when John the Baptist came with a serious message of repentance, they dismissed him as crazy. The speaker also highlights the importance of submitting to the will of Jesus and emphasizes the simplicity of the gospel message. He references John 3:16 as an example of how God's love and salvation are accessible to all through belief in Jesus.

Transcript

for the unprecedented third time and second to have a speaker back at Bristol. I've never done that before, but God wanted it, so he just went right along with his will to have back our brother Dr. Carl Armerding from Dallas. He had another thing in his favor.

He's a right fair singer too, as well as preacher, you know, so if they hadn't invited him back as a speaker, I was going to recommend he come as a soloist. Anyway, so we would get him back one way or the other, but it's my pleasure to again present to you one of God's choice servants indeed, our brother Dr. Carl Armerding. For our meditation at this time, will you please turn to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 11.

Matthew's Gospel, chapter 11, and commencing at verse 15. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We've piped unto you, and ye have not danced.

We've mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath the devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a man thoughtless, and a wine-bibber of friend of publicans and sinners.

But wisdom is justified of her children. Then began he to upraise the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, for raisins! Woe unto thee, but say that if

the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell. For if the mighty works which have been done in thee have been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day.

But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom at the day of judgment than for thee. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things in the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto me. And I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. I call your special attention to the question raised by our Lord in the sixteenth verse of this chapter, where he says, But where unto shall I liken this generation? Our Lord was accused of many things when he was here on earth. We find some of these accusations right here in this chapter, but he was never accused of not being contemporary.

This is something which is hurled at us sometimes by some of our contemporaries. They say we're not contemporary. They think we're either talking too far back in the past, especially when we talk about the Lord dying upon the cross 2,000 years ago, or we're too occupied with the future.

We're looking ahead, but we haven't anything to say, so they say, for the presence in which we live. This is an accusation which one hears quite frequently, especially from those of us who are known as fundamental preachers. But our Lord is very contemporary here.

He takes a look at the generation that was then living, and he asks this question, What is this generation really like? And I think his answer to his own question would fit well the day in which we live. But you notice that the Lord Jesus doesn't take a home scene here to answer his question. He doesn't say, Let's go into their homes and see how they live.

He doesn't say, Let's go into the synagogue and see how they worship. He says, Let's go to the marketplace. Let's go to their place of business and see how they behave themselves there.

You notice that? He says they're like children, and the word which he uses here for children is one which really means immature. An immature generation who are sitting in the marketplace, the place of business, the place where you'd expect them to be really serious about what they're doing, and here they're sitting down and making a sort of a theatrical performance of life, both in its joys and in its sorrows. And I don't need to labor the point to say that we believe we're living in a generation very much like that today.

To them, if you really want them to work, they feel insulted because you're interfering with their liberty. And some of the ads that we hear over the radio, for example, or see on the television, seem to confirm this. Not so long ago, sitting in my apartment in Dallas, I listened to a little sales talk, you know, which comes in in those five-minute news periods when about three minutes is devoted to the commercials, and one of the commercials went like this.

There's a man, he wants to hire a secretary. Girl comes in, he says, can you write shorthand? She says, no. Can you typewrite? No, but I use none too bright toothpaste.

You're hired. Now, this is the thing, making a sort of a play of life, and this was on prime time right after six o'clock in the evening. Imagine the American public being fed with this kind of stuff of one of the leading broadcasting companies in our country.

So, I don't think that I'm unjust or unfair in saying that we have here a verse which really describes the generation which we live, for the most part, making a sort of a theatrical performance of life, typing and dancing and so on, and disturbed because some of us don't respond to this. They claim they can't be heard, they claim we don't listen. But, you notice how the Lord Jesus turns this on themselves when he points out that when there were certain ones who came to them with a message, they entirely misrepresented and misjudged them.

For example, here's John the Baptist comes to them with a very solemn message. You remember his real text was, repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and they said this man's off his rock. He's got a devil, he's got a demon.

They don't like this kind of preaching, and so they resort to the manner in which many people do when they've lost a real argument. They make an attack on the person himself. You can always tell when a debater has lost an argument, he begins to attack his honorable opponent.

That's exactly what they do here. Then, the Lord Jesus comes along, who really socializes, and he sat down with publicans and sinners and ate with them. And, instead of approving of this, they say here's a man that's gluttonous and a wine giver, a friend of publicans and sinners, exactly the kind of people he came to call.

So that, you see, they're never satisfied whether it be the solemn message of judgment to come, and a calling upon people to repent of their sins, or if the Lord comes with a gracious invitation, he also is misrepresented. And then, our Lord launches in to one of the strangest and most solemn passages in the scripture. I know of no other place, unless it be the 23rd chapter of this St. Book of Matthew, where our Lord Jesus displays his greatest fight.

For he began to abrade the cities, verse 20, wherein most of his mighty works were done. And we have mentioned here one city, Chorazin, which they can't even locate the ruins of today. It's gone.

And, Bethsaida, and the Lord Jesus says some of his mighty works were done in those cities. He says, and if those mighty works which are done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, Tyre and Sidon, two cities on the Mediterranean, on the coast of what is known as the Holy Land, Tyre noted for its commerce, its business, Sidon a sort of a sister city. The Lord said, if these cities which were devoted so much to their own interest, if they had had the mighty works done in them that have been done in you, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes long ago.

And we need only to mention this, dear friends, to show how applicable this is to the day in which we live. Where is there a generation who has ever had a greater demonstration of the power of God than the generation in which you and I live? I'm talking now not about God's power in creation. They're exploring that constantly.

What they'll find when they actually put their feet on the moon, if they ever do. This is not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about God's power to save precious souls.

And even though we don't see a revival in our own country, thank God we are seeing it in other parts of the world. There's a revival going on right now in the great country of Indonesia. People simply cannot account for it.

A great revival going on in the very heart of Africa, where we have assemblies which far outnumber any assemblies in the United States or Canada. God doing a mighty work among these people. Yes, God is saving souls, even though you and I don't see very much of it where we live.

As a matter of fact, sometimes we're quite inclined to refer to our towns as a sort of a saint's rest, instead of the devil's roost. But, anyhow, dear friends, this is typical of the age in which we live, and the Lord Jesus is here making this comparison. But, he goes on to make a comparison which is even more unfavorable when he singles out the city of Capernaum as he does in verse 23.

And, Capernaum, as you know, was a city which our Lord specially chose as his residence. There are three places outside of Jerusalem which are very intimately connected with the life of our Lord. There is, of course, Bethlehem where he was born, and there's Nazareth where he was brought up.

But, Capernaum was the city which chose himself to make his residence there, and I have no doubt that it's for this reason that he said, "...and thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven." Imagine having a man like the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, as one of their chief citizens. He says of Capernaum, this highly favored city, and I'm going to use it this morning as an illustration of many of the cities in our country who have known the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. "...thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, if the mighty works which were done in thee had been done in Sodom." What'd you say? Sodom? That city which has one of the worst reputations of any city mentioned in the holy scripture? That city which has given its name to one of the most unnatural sins that men commit? You mean to say that Capernaum is going to be contrasted with the city of Sodom? Yes, and we could say the same, dear friends, of many cities in our own country.

Yes, they might well be compared with Sodom. "...if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have repented long ago." Oh, think of this! This tells us, dear friends, that you and I are living in a privileged age where we've seen the power of God in a marvelous way. Don't think for one moment, dear friends, that we're being allowed to enjoy the privileges which we do as a so-called Christian nation without some responsibility being attached to it.

We shall certainly have to answer for all the privileges which we have had, and God help us in that day when we see people standing before the throne who have never heard the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and hear God saying to us that because we've had the greater privileges, we shall have the greater judgment. How does the Lord know this? How could he say it'd be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for thee? How could he say this? Because he's the judge. He's going to conduct that case, dear friends, and this is a solemn fact to remember here this morning, and I address myself now particularly to anyone present who may not yet know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior.

Remember, dear friends, the very one who is offering you eternal life, who is offering you the pardon of your sins and peace with God, is the very one that you're going to have to face as your judgment if you don't take advantage of this day of grace. Yes, it's going to be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in that day, it says, the one who's going to be the judge. Then, strange to say, having delivered this awful solemn statement here, our Lord now changes into a mood of gratitude.

To me, it's very interesting to watch the mood of our Lord Jesus in this passage of scripture, the way in which it changes. Do you notice that now he begins to address his Father as we have it here in verse 25? At that time, Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto thee, even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. There's a Lord Jesus giving thanks for something that you and I probably think is rather strange.

Why shouldn't he give thanks that people have another opportunity? But, he's talking here about another class of individuals when he says, thou hath revealed them unto babes. This is a different word from the children mentioned there in the 16th verse when he says he likens them to children, or immature people. The word here used for babes is a word which means people who have not been spoiled, people whose minds have never been, shall I say, defiled by any of the philosophies of men, and I wouldn't be surprised that the wise and prudent to whom the Lord Jesus makes reference here are those great philosophers who had their day before he came into the world.

You know, we have two of these schools of philosophy mentioned for us in the book of the Acts where Paul is preaching at Athens, and the Epicureans and the Stoics were there. Two leading schools of philosophy. The Epicureans were practically atheists, practically that.

They had lots of gods, but they didn't recognize any particular one as being supreme. They were the kind of people that of whom we would say nowadays they're living it up, living it up. They live for pleasure.

This was their philosophy of life. Of course, they will tell you if you've studied the philosophy of Epicurus, they'll tell you that Epicurus never intended for anybody to indulge in a pleasure that cost too much. There always had to be a pleasure that he'd never regret.

That, of course, is basic to his philosophy, but how many, instead of counting the cost, they live it up. And again, we have a perfect illustration of what many people are doing today. The Stoics, on the other hand, were people who attempted to shut out of their lives anything that would disturb their peace, and if they had to go through any kind of an unpleasant experience, they looked upon it more or less as something they couldn't do anything about.

It was the will of the gods. They were pantheists. They believed that God was imminent in everything.

God is in this desk, he's in this microphone, what have you. He's in the seat on which you sit, he's in the clouds, he's in the birds. Pantheism, which we have a modern illustration in Christian science which is a pantheistic system, and also a Stoical system.

And, in addition to these two schools of philosophy mentioned for us in the Bible, we have, of course, the honored names of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle. All of these lived in the five centuries preceding the Christian era. They were the wise and the prudent, and I have no doubt that Saint Paul had them in mind when he wrote that first chapter of 1 Corinthians when he said, when the world by its wisdom or by its philosophy knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them the belief.

And yet, men in these days are turning again to these philosophies. Today, we have a school of philosophy which is very popular at the moment. It's called existentialism.

I've often been asked for a definition of that. Well, I've tried my level best to find a simple one, but about all I can come up with is something like this. There are people who believe in the here and now, but they

haven't much time for the there and then.

The there and then may refer to the past, the there and then may refer to the future, but they are living entirely for the present. One of their great leaders, a Frenchman by the name of Descartes, years ago expressed his philosophy in three Latin words which translated are, I think, therefore I am. But, he didn't tell you what makes you think.

So that you're the you're the result of thinking, not of creation, not of some being who brought you into being such as you and I as Christians believe. All of these were the wise and the prudent that had had their day when the Lord Jesus stood up and made this statement. And yet, dear friends, here nearly 2,000 years after the Lord Jesus made this statement, the 2,000 years or so after Saint Paul wrote those words to which I referred in 1 Corinthians, the first chapter, when the world by its wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe.

They're still at it, still teaching our young people the same thing. And, I've been in these institutions of learning. I thank God the one with which I was connected for some 14 years is very careful to point out to its students the failure of these philosophies to give man that for which his heart craves.

Or, as Saint Augustine put it one day, his words have been variously translated, but it's something like this, our hearts are restless till they rest in thee. And so, we find our Lord having given expression to this, and having thanked his Father that he'd hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and revealed them unto babes, those who were willing to come in all their innocence and simplicity to hear what God has to say. And now, we come to that which is one of the sweetest passages in all the Word of God.

Look at these words in verse 28 and follow us now. Come unto me. How simple.

You know this word, come, a word of one syllable. It's one of those words that we teach our babies almost from the beginning of their lives, don't we? What father or grandfather has not bowed over the crib of a precious little child, and held out his fingers and said, come? And, you're using God's simple language to a sinful soul. Way back in the reason together said the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.

Though they were red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Come. The woman at the well learned the same thing, when after having tasted the living water from the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ, she went into the city and said to the men, come.

Come, see a man who told me all things, whatever I did is not this, the Christ. I can't think of any words simpler than this, unless it be the word look. Look unto me and be saved all the ends of the earth.

Oh, how simple the gospel is, isn't it? Have you ever thought of this, and I'm sure some of you have, that the verse which is probably better known than any other verse in the New Testament, John 3 16, that the first 10 words in that verse are words of one syllable, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoso believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Oh, that's putting it down where the simplest of us can understand it. Yes, God's word is simple.

Come unto me. Yes, but sometimes we wonder who the speaker is who could use words like these. Years ago, listening to the late Dr. Ironside, he's telling a story of a Japanese convert in the city of Los Angeles.

This Japanese was so thrilled that God had reached his heart with the gospel of his grace that he wanted to leave a testimony in his cobbler shop where he was a cobbler. So, he thought he'd put these words into Japanese, which he did. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest.

And, his Japanese customers came in and saw this text on the wall, and they got to arguing among themselves. Who said this? Did Buddha say this? Buddha, by the way, he also lived some five or six centuries before the Christian era. Yes, he's got a lot of adherents today in the Orient, and some even in our own country.

But, as they looked at these words and said, I don't remember anywhere that Buddha ever said anything like that. And, along comes a Confucianist, and he says, well, I don't remember that Confucius ever said anything like that. And, along comes a Muslim, and he looks at it, and he says, and I don't remember that Muhammad ever said anything like that.

And, then they turned to the cobbler, Mr. Yamaguchi, and they said, who said this? And, he looked at them in astonishment, he said, who could say it but the Lord Jesus? Friends, this is unique. This belongs to one person only. This belongs to the blessed son of God, who says to a sin-sick, tired soul, like you may be here this morning without the Lord Jesus that has come to me, I'll give you, I won't sell you, I'll give you rest as a gift.

And, you know, dear friends, back of this is all the mighty work of Calvary, for our Lord was here anticipating the day when he was going to take the very load which he invites you to roll upon him. He was going to bear that load on Calvary's cross to you and for me. Oh, what a load was thine to bear alone in that dark hour.

Our sins in all their terror there, God's wrath and Satan's power. Yes, he bore that in order that he might be able to say to you and me this morning, come unto me, come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden, I will give you. What it costs the son of God to make that good, dear friends, is not revealed in this passage of scripture, but it is revealed before you get to the end of this gospel.

And sometimes when one sits down and meditates on a text like this, it's one of the best things you can do is to ask yourself, how could he make such a statement? How could he do it? To invite whosoever will let him come. He doesn't put any restrictions here except to say, all you that labor and are heavy laden. And dear friends, I wouldn't limit this this morning to those who have never come to the Savior, but I've discovered as I come to conferences like this that many of God's children are bearing burdens today.

Oh, and some of them have real burdens. These are days when Satan is making a bid for our children and our grandchildren, the like of which I don't think I've ever seen in all my life. If there's one thing I'm burdened with as I pray from morning to morning, is I remember not only my children, but my 18 grandchildren, to bring their names to him and think of these young people, some of them in schools of learning where they're exposed to all kinds of infidelity.

Talking to a grandson of mine just last February down in Altadena, California, and he's attending a school which is a religious school where they have to take Bible studies. He says, you know, Grandpa, we learned in school that the Israelites never crossed the Red Sea, like it says in the Bible. They just went across the mud flat.

I said, well, but the Bible says something about the standing up on either side of them like a wall, and it's in the same chapter. Oh, well, he said, it just looked like that in the dark, had all the answers. They get these answers from these infidel professors who are actually teaching in these supposed Christian schools of learning, and teaching a young lad in his early teens this kind of stuff.

And then he went on further to say, and you remember the story about them crossing the Jordan River? I said, yes, I remember the story well. I said, what do you got to say about that one? Well, he said, you know, there must have been a landslide up the river, and the land slid down, stopped the water from coming across, and that's how the Israelites got across the Jordan. I said, remarkable, that happened just when they wanted it to happen.

And it stayed long enough for them all to get across, and very deliberate, even after they were all across, there were certain ceremonies which still had to be carried on. I said, son, I said, you better come back to a simple faith in the old statement of the word of God. If God moves those waters back, he looked at me as much as he said, poor grandpa, he belongs to a past age.

I mention these things, dear friends, to show you we've got our burdens, we really have. And, oh, to be on our faces before God, crying to him that somehow he will bring these young people to a point where they'll put their simple, childlike trust in the Son of God. Oh, am I speaking to some of you who are younger here this morning? I'm so pleased to see you.

One of the highlights of the Bristol Conference to me is to see such a large proportion of young people here. Let me pass on something to a man who's been around here for some fourscore years. This thing that I'm talking about really works, and I've seen it work not only in my own life, saw it work in the lives of my parents, I saw it work in the lives of others whom it has been my privilege to preach to and bring to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, it really was. Come unto him. Oh, he that labor, whatever the load may be, whether it be a load of sin that you cannot shake off, whether it be a load of care that's weighing you down with all of its weight, he says, come unto me.

You say, but preacher, isn't there anything else I need to do besides come? Yes, there's one thing to do. He says, and take my yoke upon you. That tells me, dear friends, he wants us to be submissive to him.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest of your souls. Oh, friends, I'm afraid that here's where some of us fall down. We claim to be Christians.

We claim to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but we've never submitted to his Lordship, as we were hearing so eloquently put last night in that address on the sixth chapter of Romans. Oh, friends, to take his yoke means that you submit yourself to his will. I had this impressed upon me when I was just a young lad up to Nova Scotia to a Bible conference.

I was just 17 at the time, and I was billeted on a farm where they were still using oxen to pull their carts, and there was coal to be hauled from a certain, the Gasparro River there, and I was asked if I would undertake to bring over several loads of this coal. Well, I had nothing else to do but sit on the cart and poke a toxin or haul a G to them, and they'd go right and haul, and they'd go left. They were trained for that.

I thought, this is wonderful. They were easier to handle because I had a great big heavy yoke on, but after the day was over, the yoke was removed, and I was asked if I would like to take them down to the slough for a drink of water. Something else now.

It's true they had a rope around their necks, but this little boy that weighed about 135 or 140 pounds at the time was no match for them. They were no longer being restrained by the yoke when a boy sitting on the cart could poke him and make him go where he wanted to go. No, they were no longer under my control.

Friend, is this a picture of some of us who have never submitted to the loving will of our Lord Jesus? Friend, I don't know anything sweeter in all my life than to start each day with this very saying as I whispered in the ears of my Lord, Lord, I'm here once again this morning to submit myself to thy perfect will. Come unto me, all of you that are here. Friend, if you've never done it, won't you just stop around for a few minutes after this meeting? There are just dozens of people in here who would be delighted to speak to you about this, who would think it a great privilege if you were to approach them and say, you've got this rest about which the preacher was talking, and you tell me how I can get it.

Don't you leave this place this morning without it. This may be the last time you'll ever have an opportunity. Tomorrow's sun may never rise to bless thy long-deluded sight.

This is the time. Oh, thank you, Lord. Do it now.

In closing, let us turn to hymn number 47. Hymn number 47. I heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest.

Lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast. I came to Jesus. I hope you'll be able to put it in that tense.

I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad. I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad. Number 47.

Let's stand to sing. I heard the voice of Jesus say, come on. I heard the voice.

Our gracious God and our Father, we thank thee for this sweet invitation of our Lord Jesus. We thank thee, O God, that even though we merited all the judgment of which he spoke earlier, when he said it would be more tolerable in that day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for us, yet how gracious, O Lord, how gracious of thee to turn to a people who have sinned so grievously against thee and say, come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Lord, grant that these words may find an effective response in some heart here this morning, and for those of us, Lord, who may be carrying burdens that we find far too heavy for us, let us learn afresh, Lord, what it means to come unto thee, with all the weight of cares upon us, to cast it all upon thee, Lord, and know that thou will sustain us.

To this end, bless thy word, and speed us now with thy benediction. Bless us during the time between the meetings. Bless us as we sit around the tables together, and we'll give thee all the praise through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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